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PAGE 01 BUENOS 06701 202149Z
ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6452
INFO AMEMBASSY LA PAZ PRIORITY

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E.O. 12065: XDS-4 8/16/00 (RUSER, CLAUS W.) OR-M
TAGS: PEPR PINS PINT AR BL
SUBJECT: ARGENTINE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST SILES ZUAZO

1. S - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. ON AUGUST 14 EMBASSY OFFICER AND ARMY ATTACHE MET WITH THREE SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMY GENERAL STAFF. THE THREE ARGENTINES WERE INTIMATELY INVOLVED AND AWARE OF THE ARGENTINE ARMY'S ROLE IN BOLIVIA. IN DISCUSSING THAT ROLE THEY MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS TO EMBASSY OFFICERS:
--FIRST, THE ARGENTINE ARMY, WHILE DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT EVENTS, HAD CONCLUDED IN THE SPRING OF 1980 THAT IT WOULD BE FAR BETTER TO HAVE A CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT TAKE OFFICE IN LA PAZ AND DISCREDIT ITSELF THAN TO BLOCK THE ASSESSION OF AN ELECTED GOVERNMENT THROUGH A PREMATURE COUP. AFTER THE CIVILIANS HAD PROVEN THEIR INCOMPETENCE A MILITARY COUP WOULD HAVE BEEN TOLERATED OR EVEN ACCEPTED BY MOST BOLIVIANS. HOWEVER, THOUGH THIS WAS THE ARGENTINE GAME PLAN, GARCIA MEZA AND HIS COLLEAGUES DID NOT ACCEPT IT AND MADE THEIR COUP ON THEIR OWN INITIATIVE.
--SECOND, THE ONLY ACTIVE-DUTY ARGENTINE ARMY PERSONNEL IN BOLIVIA ARE THOSE WHOSE NAMES HAVE ALREADY BEEN

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PAGE 02 BUENOS 06701 202149Z

SUPPLIED TO THE EMBASSY. ARGENTINES MAY BE OPERATING WITH BOLIVIAN POLITICAL AND GOVERNMENTAL GROUPS BUT THEY ARE NOT ARMY PERSONNEL. WHILE OUR SOURCES WERE AMBIGUOUS ON THIS THEY SOUGHT TO LEAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THESE NONMILITARY PERSONNEL WERE DRAWN FROM AMONG THE MANY THOUSANDS OF ARGENTINE CITIZENS WHO HAVE LONG

MADE THEIR HOMES IN BOLIVIA. THEY CHALLENGED US TO PROVIDE THEM WITH THE NAMES OF ARGENTINES WHO ARE ACTIVE WITH THE SECURITY FORCES AND PARA-MILITARY GROUPS.
--THIRD, THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT, OUR SOURCES CLAIM, HAD SOLID INFORMATION THAT SILES ZUAZO AND PEOPLE AROUND HIM WERE IN TOUCH WITH MONTONERS AND SILES ZUAZO HAD PROMISED THE LATTER THAT THEY WOULD BE ALLOWED TO OPERATE IN BOLIVIA SHOULD SILES ZUAZO WIN THE ELECTIONS. THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT, WAS THEY SAID, ALSO VERY CONCERNED AT THE PRESENCE IN THE SILES ZUAZO COALITION OF COMMUNISTS AND THE MIR. THE ARGENTINES PROMISED TO SUPPLY US WITH THE INFORMATION ON WHICH THEY BASED THIS CONCLUSION. (WE HAVE NOW RECEIVED WHAT IS PROMISED TO BE THE FIRST SET OF REPORTS. WE WILL BE SUBMITTING THEM SEPARATELY. IN SUMMARY, THUS FAR THE ARGENTINE EVIDENCE AGAINST SILES ZUAZO APPEARS THIN AT

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BEST, THOUGH IT MAY BE THE BASIS FOR THEIR ASSESSMENT.)

3. OUR SOURCES AVERRED THAT GARCIA MEZA IS SECURELY IN POWER IN BOLIVIA. AT THE SAME TIME THEY ALSO SAID THAT ISOLATING HIM INTERNATIONALLY CAN ONLY WEAKEN HIM AND BRING HIM DOWN. SHOULD HE FALL, THEY SAID, HE WOULD BE REPLACED BY MARXISTS AND FAR LEFTISTS. THEY ASKED REPEATEDLY WAS THIS AN OUTCOME THE US WANTED, AND IF NOT, WHAT DID THE US PROPOSE AS A SOLUTION IN BOLIVIA?

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PAGE 03

BUENOS 06701 202149Z

4. DAO WILL BE TRANSMITTING THROUGH SEPTTEL THE ARGENTINE REPORTS AND ANALYSIS ON WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HERE ALLEGEDLY BASED ITS CONCLUSION THAT A SILES ZUAZO GOVERNMENT CONSTITUTED AN UNACCEPTABLE THREAT.
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1 of 3

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1 of 3